UNIVERSITY OF KENT
INFORMATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2011

Present: Professor J Baldock (Chairman), Mr MEC Banbery, Professor MD Fischer, Dr J Mills, Mr J Pink, Mr J Sotillo, Mr S Thornton, Dr AH Ward, Ms G Woodhams, Mrs JC Hornsby (Secretary).

Apologies: Professor D Chadwick, Mr M Ellis, Mr NSR Jackson.

12/10-11 The Chairman welcomed Miles Banbery (representing the Acting Director of Communications and Marketing) to the meeting.

13/10-11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2010 were approved.

14/10-11 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

15/10-11 COMPUTER USER PANEL

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2011 were received (paper ISC 14/10-11) and noted. In relation to minute 13, the Chairman reported that the Terms of Reference for the CUP were under discussion.

16/10-11 LIBRARY USER PANEL

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2011 were received and noted (paper ISC 15/10-11). The chairman of the LUP spoke to the minutes, and reported that the strong view of the panel was that the proposals for the Templeman Library's developments should be taken forward as a package and not be picked off one by one.

The Committee recognised that the LUP (and the CUP) were panels made up largely of enthusiasts. The panels themselves were set up as fora for communication with the communities they serve, but it is not clear that the discussions, decisions and recommendations of the panels were getting through to ordinary academics. The Committee wondered whether the current representation was the most efficient use of academics' time, or whether some further targeted ex officio membership (for example DoLTs feeding into Faculty Boards/LTCs/Research Boards) might be better. It was recognised that the Chair of CUP was attempting to address with the discussions on the CUP remit, and so the Committee agreed to look at this question again when the CUP Chair was present.

17/10-11 DRILL HALL LIBRARY USER GROUP

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2011 were received and noted (paper ISC 16/10-11). Under item 5 where there was reference to future student numbers, the Committee acknowledged that there were difficulties in planning for the future when there are multiple, sometimes competing institutions in on these sensitive discussions. This might go
some way to explain why data on future student numbers were not readily available at this and the subsequent Medway Campus Management meeting. In any event, the DHL are planning for a steady state of student numbers for the foreseeable future; and all internal Kent requests for data on projected student numbers should be directed to the Planning and Business Information Office, which has detailed forecasts of student numbers.

18/10-11 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

The Committee received the Acting Director’s report ISC 17/10-11. The timescale for the report is shorter than usual because the tenure of the Acting Director will cease at the end of July 2011, at which point the outcomes of the Professional Services review should be known.

19/10-11 REPORTS FROM THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES

(i) Director’s Report

The Director of Information Services spoke to his report (paper ISC 18/10-11), and drew the attention of the Committee to the following points in particular:

A2 Severe Weather
The Committee joined with the Director of Information services in thanking those staff who had continued to work during the severe weather in November 2010, when much of the rest of the campus had effectively closed down.

A3 Extended Opening Hours
The Templeman Library will shortly be moving to the annual extended opening hours for exams season; much positive student feedback has been received in response to the longer opening times. However, these hours are not mirrored at the DHL at Medway, which has led to occasional complaints.

A5 Book Sorter
The new book sorter is in operation and is providing some real efficiencies for staff.

B22 Admissions System
There has been a good deal of activity on this front; work has been ongoing on the six month project for quick wins for the current admissions system, and there has also been work on the development/procurement of a replacement system Currently the team are looking at a US product called TALISMA, essentially a CRM system looking to break into the UK market. There are benefits to this – a CRM system is more easily customisable than off-the-shelf admissions systems. The initial focus is for a first interface CRM (recruitment and admission) but there is lots of potential for CRM elsewhere, for instance, student support).

If the procurement process does not prove fruitful, then further internal development work on the current admission system will need to be undertaken.

B23 Network and Server Room
The Committee welcomed this development and noted that the work is just about to go out to tender, with a view to the work being done by the end of August 2011.

(ii) IS Strategy 2010-2013

The Director of Information Services spoke to this final version of the report (ISC19/10-11) which followed the format of the draft report seen by the Committee at their earlier meeting, and highlighted 5 key areas on which IS intended to focus: Environments, Resources,
Empowerment, Effective IT and Performance. The final report is informed by feedback received on the draft.

The Committee commended the report and recommended that it be sent, together with the Operational Plan (see below) to Senate, with the following observation:

Greater use of technology is key in the coming years, and this will require greater resource in Information Services. There is a misconception that more efficient use of technology and the use of more efficient technology is cheaper; however, in order to make more effective use of academics’ time by using IT to help deliver teaching more efficiently, investment is needed in technology, and also in people with the right skills to manage and maintain it.

(iii) IS Operational Plan 2010-2011

The Committee received the IS operational Plan 2010-2011 (ISC 20/10-11) which linked into the Strategy via the 5 key areas. The Committee endorsed the objective that the savings made by efficiencies in IT need to be tied more closely to Departmental operational efficiencies, as indicated by project 972 (Develop and adopt a cost-benefit methodology for assessing University IT projects).

**ACTION: SECRETARY TO SEND STRATEGY AND OPERATIONAL PLAN TO SENATE**

(iv) Templeman Library Development Priorities

The Committee received paper ISC 21/10-11 which set out a number of urgent issues which need action if the user experience is to see any benefit. There has been ongoing maintenance work since the options report on potential large scale developments for the Library was put together in 2008, but IS have to date been unable to get Estates to put in place a regular schedule to deal with the immediate needs of the building for repair and renewal.

There are positive moves by the University to report:
- EG awarded £200k for the book fund, following sight of this report
- Estates have been charged with taking forward the issues with the windows, roof and rewiring
- Estates also commissioned a feasibility study for the extension of the library

The Committee welcomed all of the above, while fully endorsing the thrust of the report, namely that the priorities should be taken as a package, and not a list from which to cherry pick projects.

**ACTION: CHAIRMAN TO PRESENT REPORT TO EG**

(v) Review of Alumni Email Service

The Committee received paper ISC 22/10-11 a report on the set up and running of the alumni email service to date, as required by EG. Feedback from users and stakeholders (such as the Careers Service and Alumni Office) has been positive, and the costs more modest than anticipated.

For these reasons, IS recommend that the service be embedded, and made stable and robust. The costs of running will be absorbed by IS, and the service will be extended to ex-staff and PGR students.
(vi) Departmental Materials Fund

The Committee received paper ISC 23/10-11 on the Departmental Materials Fund, and more specifically, the challenges arising from the absence of an annual increase in 2010-2011.

It was noted firstly, that since the report had been written, EG had awarded a further £200k to the fund (see minute 19/10-11 (iv) above).

The most pressing issue, that of the loss of electronic subscriptions, was discussed by the Committee. Academic schools had been unwilling to contribute to the subscription for the Springer bundle under the current funding model and as a result the subscription had lapsed. A new deal with significant changes to titles has been negotiated for Springer which runs until 31 December, but there is currently an impasse on the proposed funding model (leaving the fund 50% short), which means that the value of that deal is decreasing daily. The overall cost of the bundle is relatively small, at c.£60k.

A larger issue looming is the Elsevier deal which is due for renegotiation in the summer. The costs of that are around £300k.

Funding models are being discussed with Faculty Deans, and this whole area may need to be included in the annual agenda for the Schools’ Planning Meetings.

It was agreed that the Director of Information Services should bring an update on this issue to the next meeting.

ACTION: DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SERVICES

20/10-11 STUDENT DATA SYSTEM

The Committee received paper (ISC 24/10-11), for information.

21/10-11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 8 June 2011.